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FUTURE MISSIONARY POLICY IN CHINA.

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FUTURE MISSIONARY POLICY IN CHINA.

A NOTABLE CONFERENCE OF MISSIONARY SECRETARIES.

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Secretary of the Presbyterian Board for Foreign Missions.

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Now that immediate danger of the further destruction of missionary life in China has probably passed, stupendous problems of reconstruction confront us. Never before in all the history of missions have such difficult and delicate questions called for an answer. The work of the largest mission field in the world is paralyzed, many stations have been abandoned, and the missionaries are fugitives in the port cities, and in Korea and Japan, while at home the expediency of the whole missionary enterprise is being challenged (the boards are urged to send no more missionaries to China, and some people frankly say, that in any event they will give no more money for missionary work in China.)

In these circumstances every board has a heavy responsibility. In order that we in the Presbyterian Board might have sound counsel, we first sought the opinions of the missionaries themselves. So we cabled to those assembled in Chefoo, asking them to hold a meeting, consider the policy that ought to be adopted, and wire us their judgment. Providentially, there were about forty Presbyterian missionaries from China in this country on furlough. We selected eight wise, devoted men, representing all our missions in China, brought them to New York at the expense of the board, and spent many profitable hours with them, listening to all that was in their hearts, after the months of thought and prayer which they had naturally given to the subject. Nor was this all, for we wrote to all the other missionaries from China now in the United States, explaining that while it was impracticable for financial reasons to bring so many to New York, yet we desired their opinions too, and requesting each one to freely write any suggestions. Thus we did everything in our power to ascertain the views of the devoted missionaries themselves.

Realizing, however, that the questions before us were common to other boards similarly situated, all the boards of foreign missions in the United States and Canada, having work in China, were invited to send delegates to an interdenominational conference in New York. The invitation was cordially accepted, and September 21 thirty-two delegates assembled in our board rooms, representing nearly all the leading Protestant bodies of America. In this conference also the entire ground was traversed, step by step, including a docket embracing thirty topics and sub-topics. The conference was of extraordinary interest and value. While the discussions were free and the opinions not always unanimous, yet harmony prevailed to a remarkable degree.

The session began with a season of special prayer for Divine guidance, and never was prayer more plainly answered. We separated, feeling that we had been greatly helped, that our vision had been clarified, and that we were prepared to submit clearer judgment to our respective boards.

The main lines of policy agreed upon by both missionaries and board representatives (for with one minor exception practically identical views were expressed in the two conferences), and which will now be voted upon by the boards concerned were as follows:

RESUMPTION OF THE WORK.

1. While the uprising in China has, of course, had a restrictive, and in some places a deeply injurious present effect on missionary operations, there is no adequate ground for discouragement, and the work ought to be, and must be resumed at as early a date as may be practicable and wise. There is no disposition to be reckless in reopening stations. We do not underestimate the possible consequences of premature resumption of work. The servants of the Lord must be sensible. But not for a moment are we discouraged. Clear, strong, and unanimous was the note of both conferences that God will overrule this disturbance for the furtherance of the Gospel, that just as the most successful era of missionary work in India followed the mutiny of 1857, so will a new day for China date from the Boxer riots of 1900, that not only should every destroyed station be rebuilt, but that plans should be made for reenforcements and increased expenditures, in order that the Church of God may seize the coming strategic opportunity to win China for Christ. The missionaries in particular were united and enthusiastic in the conviction that a large number of new missionaries will be needed next year, and that the young men in the theological seminaries should be encouraged to apply for appointment.

AN AGGRESSIVE POLICY AT HOME.

2. In view of the public interest in China, the frequent denial of the validity of the whole missionary enterprise, and the fact that the missionary cause now has the attention of the country as never before, it was unanimously agreed that we should adopt an aggressive policy at home. A committee was therefore appointed to prepare a joint letter to the American churches, reaffirming the Divine authority of missions as of supreme and perpetual obligation, emphasizing the true significance of the present situation in China, and summoning the churches to special gifts for the reestablishment and enlargement of the work, and to the observance of the week beginning October 28th, as *a week of special prayer*, with memorial services for martyred missionaries. It was also voted that the letter should include reference

to the noble fidelity of the Chinese Christians under the awful persecution to which they have been subjected, commend them to the sympathies and prayers of God's people everywhere, and heartily indorse the appeal of Minister Conger and representative missionaries in Peking, for relief contributions, the conference holding that these Christians were worthy of a generosity similar to that which has been extended to the famine sufferers in India. We hope that this letter will be read from every pulpit in the United States and Canada, and made the subject of Sabbath sermons, mid-week devotional meetings, family prayers, and such other services as may be deemed advisable by the pastors concerned.

THE MISSIONARIES NOW IN CHINA.

3. Sympathetic consideration was given to the embarrassment of the missionaries who are crowded in the port cities, with only the scanty clothing they happened to be wearing when they fled from their stations, and forced to pay high prices for rent and supplies. Is the interruption of work likely to be so long continued that they should come home? Both furloughed missionaries and board representatives felt that a general recall to America was neither necessary nor expedient. Such a return would involve an enormous expense, for our Presbyterian Board alone has over 150 China missionaries still abroad. It would destroy the continuity of the work, leave the Chinese Christians to unrelieved suffering and disaster, and the remaining mission property to be still further damaged. It would make it impossible to resume the work if, in the providence of God, such ^{resumption} ~~resumption~~ should be practicable within a few months. The home church would be unfavorably affected by such a general withdrawal, naturally construing it as an admission of defeat, and indefinite postponement of missionary work, and in consequence diminishing gifts, while as the usual term of service in China is about eight years, so many furloughs now would mean that eight or nine years hence most of the missionaries in China would need a furlough, and so another general exodus would be necessary, thus practically subjecting the work for an indefinite period to alternations of vigorous effort, and more or less complete inaction. All agreed therefore that, except where conditions of ill health or nervous strain render an immediate return necessary, the missionaries now on the field should await developments in Korea, Japan, and such China ports as may be safe, in anticipation of an early resumption of the work, the care and reconstruction of the mission property, and particularly the guidance and comfort of the Chinese Christians, who otherwise would be left to the wolves as sheep having no shepherd. The suggestion was made that missionaries who may not be able to return to their own stations might temporarily assist other stations or missions.

In like manner, there was general agreement that while each board must determine for itself when missionaries on furlough and new missionaries under appointment should leave for their respective fields, such missionaries should not anticipate an indefinite delay in this country, but should hold themselves in readiness to sail at such dates as might prove practicable in consultation with their respective boards. Some of these rested, vigorous men may be needed at once to relieve their North China brethren who have been exhausted by the awful experiences of recent months.

THE QUESTION OF INDEMNITY.

4. Much time was given to the question of indemnity. Eight boards reported definite knowledge of destroyed or damaged property, in some instances to a very large amount, while most of the other boards anticipated losses. Not all saw alike on this question. There was, ~~however~~, unanimity in the conviction that it would be highly unbecoming in the followers of Christ to manifest a mercenary spirit and make exorbitant demands upon the Chinese, especially as corrupt officials would probably squeeze the required sums out of the innocent villagers, and count themselves lucky in getting off so easy. After full discussion, vote was taken upon the motion that: (a) When the governments shall ask for information as to claims for indemnity, such claims should not include suffering, loss of life, or interruption of work, but only the actual value of destroyed or injured property, and the extraordinary expenses incurred in consequence of the troubles, and (b) in exceptional cases, for loss of life which has destroyed the means of support for wife and children.

The question being divided, (a) was carried unanimously, though one delegate did not vote. On (b) a majority held that in such cases a claim might reasonably be made on behalf of an otherwise destitute family, though a minority felt that not even then should a money value be placed on missionary life, and that the care of dependent relatives was a proper charge on the home church. It was unanimously voted that claims for indemnity should not be presented by individual missionaries directly to the civil authorities, but only through their respective boards, and that it was inexpedient to appoint an interdenominational committee to collate and present these claims, but that each board should act for itself.

The thought here was not to interfere with the liberty of any missionary, but rather to relieve him and also the government. Several hundred missionaries are involved. They are widely scattered. While a few are so situated that they might effectively push their own claims, a large majority would be under great disadvantage in conducting the necessary negotiations. Nor must we forget the em-

barrassment to which our government might be exposed. The State Department has been exceedingly kind, and no member of the administration has ever even hinted at the annoyance of which Lord Salisbury complained in England. Nevertheless, we can readily see what delicacies would be involved if so many individuals were to be pushing indemnity claims with varying degrees of vigor and with widely different ideas as to what objects should be included. Moreover, experience with Oriental governments hardly justifies the belief that the indemnity will be paid within ten days! While the negotiations are pending, how are the missionaries to be carried? They must have immediate reimbursement for the extraordinary expense which they have incurred. Manifestly the boards must stand behind the missionaries, promptly meeting their necessary and pressing obligations, and then deal with the government regarding the indemnity. The boards are better able to bear the burden of delay than the individual missionaries. In the Presbyterian Board we shall follow the analogy of our annual estimates, ask each individual and station to make out a schedule, have it voted on by the mission, and then forwarded to the board in New York. In this way the vexed question of indemnity can be handled in an orderly and prudent manner. We shall avoid demands which might subject the whole missionary enterprise to criticism, and we shall not embitter the Chinese by taking what might be deemed unfair advantage of them.

MISSIONARIES AND THE CIVIL POWERS.

5. The conference was not disposed to allow critics to define the relation of the missionary to the civil power, especially as those critics do not ordinarily distinguish between the radically different practises of Roman Catholics and Protestants. It was felt that this would be a good time for the Protestant missionary bodies to put themselves on record. As such a paper could not wisely be framed amid the hurry of a conference, a committee was appointed to draft it, and to report at the annual joint conference next January. Meantime, the Presbyterian missionaries unanimously declared it to be their rule not to apply to the civil authorities unless absolutely necessary, and that they had repeatedly refused to make such appeals when they might reasonably have done so. The Rev. Dr. A. A. Fulton, of Canton, stated that he had not appealed to the civil authorities half a dozen times in twenty years. The Rev. A. M. Cunningham, of Peking, had appealed only twice in eight and a half years, and then simply to transmit information; the Rev. P. W. McClintock, of Hainan, only once in eight years; the Rev. Dr. J. N. Hayes, of Suchou, once in eighteen years; the Rev. J. H. Laughlin, of Shantung, never in nineteen years. And the missionaries stated that they believed themselves

to be fairly representative of the practise of American Protestant missionaries in China.

A significant indication of the attitude of the boards was given in the vote on a request that had been cabled from China to several boards, asking them to protest to Washington against the proposed evacuation of Peking by the allied armies and the reinstatement of the empress-dowager, as disastrous to missions. Some of the missionaries thought that such a protest should be made on the ground that the withdrawal of the armies and the reinstatement of the empress would be construed by the Chinese as a victory for them, destroy the moral effect of the occupation of Peking, and perhaps lead to the renewal of trouble. The interdenominational conference, however, unanimously voted to take no action. Some of its members had decided convictions as to what the governments ought to do; but they held that it was not proper for missionary workers, as such, to proffer unasked advice to the government in a matter so distinctly within its sphere, nor were they willing to go on record assaying that an armed force is necessary to missionary interests anywhere. While several of the missionaries felt that the instigators and leaders of the uprising should be punished in the interest of future security, the majority declared that this question also belonged to the government, which was understood to have it under consideration, and that any demand on the part of missionaries or boards was to be seriously deprecated. The power of the sword has not been committed to us, and the civil magistrate to whom it has been committed should, in our judgment, exercise that power on his own initiative and responsibility.

THE QUESTION OF COMITY.

On May 15, the Presbyterian Board adopted a declaration of principles of comity, and expressed to its sister boards its cordial willingness to cooperate in any practical measures to carry them into effect. The suggestion was made that a providential opportunity had now occurred. Manifestly the conference could not take final action on such a question, but it unanimously adopted the following resolution:

It is the judgment of this conference that the resumption of mission work in those parts of China where it has been interrupted would afford a favorable opportunity for putting into practise some of the principles of mission comity which have been approved by a general consensus of opinion among missionaries and boards, especially in regard to the overlapping of fields and such work as printing and publishing, higher education and hospital work, and the conference would commend the subject to the favorable consideration and action of the various boards and their missionaries.

Each board will immediately inaugurate a vigorous foreign mis-

sionary campaign among the home churches. In the Presbyterian Board, we are urging the missionaries from China now in this country to avail themselves of the public interest by freely contributing articles to the religious and secular papers, and to ^{give} ~~place~~ all practicable time ~~to~~ the home department secretary for addresses. We are calling upon the churches not only to maintain their usual gifts but to provide a large fund with which we can meet the extraordinary expenses incurred during recent months, and in due time rebuild the ruined stations and enlarge the work. We propose to divide this estimated special expenditure into shares of one hundred dollars each, and endeavor to place them with churches, societies, and individuals, such shares to be in excess of ordinary contributions and of the fifteen per cent. increase required for the maintenance of the regular work.

It will thus be seen that the steady tone of both conferences was distinctively hopeful. All felt that the American churches are now being brought into new relations with the unevangelized races. They must no longer regard foreign missions as simply one of many causes calling for collections, but be led to recognize the world-wide preaching of the Gospel as the great work for which the Church is set. May we not confidently rely upon the prayers of all the friends of missions as we now summon the churches to go forward in the name of the Lord of Hosts?

THE MARTYRED MISSIONARIES.

Very tender was that part of the conference in which report was made of martyrdoms. Only two boards represented were thus bereaved, but they have lost heavily. The American Board announced the massacre of one man and two women at Pao-ting-fu and the entire Shansi force—five men, five women, and five children. The Presbyterian board mourns the death of three men, two women, and three children at Pao-ting-fu—a total for both boards of eighteen missionaries and eight little ones. Considering the large number of American missionaries in China, and the magnitude and violence of the outbreak, this is a comparatively small numerical loss. But when we add the European missionaries who also ascended in that tumult of fire, the list lengthens to appalling proportions. None who knew them can scan that roll of martyrs without feeling that the soil of China has been forever consecrated by the blood of God's saints—"of whom the world was not worthy." May God show the shining of His face through the cloud of sorrow, and may He grant to those who remain a new spirit of love and power for the Master who Himself tasted the bitterness of death for us all!

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